

Blue Collar Fiction

Discussion Questions for *Exit Velocity*, by Barbara Gregorich

1. Rowan never uses the term “blue collar.” She always says “worker” or “working class.” Why do you think that is? Which term do you prefer? Why?
2. How does the first sentence of *Exit Velocity* tie Rowan’s fate to that of the working class? Are you surprised by the two reasons she gives for needing a job: for survival, and for self-esteem. How important is self-esteem to individuals? Is Big Business concerned with employee self-esteem? Explain your thoughts on this.
3. Even though Rowan has no job and no money, she is still better off than millions of workers. In what way(s) is she better off?
4. How does Nolan, Rowan’s foreman, behave? What do you think he thinks about the pizzas and candy bars he hands out? What do Rowan and Mateo and Lyle think of them? When he behaves in this fashion, who does Nolan represent?
5. What are the health dangers faced by workers at Package Nova? Do you think the company should supply them with protective devices, or should they be made to pay for them out of their salary? Explain why.
6. What is solidarity? Do the members of Working Class Control have it? Explain. Do the people who come to the Package Nova demonstrations have it? What role does solidarity play in the crucial scenes in *Exit Velocity*?
7. What do you think of Keisha’s chant to Package Nova? What role does her chant play in the demonstrations?
8. What are some of the things about life under capitalism that horrify Deeply? What kind of information does he report back to FeeOna? Why?
9. Why do you think it’s easy for Jake to accept Rowan’s beliefs and to help Working Class Control through his videos? What is it about his character and background that sends him in this direction?
10. Were you surprised by anything about Lyle, Rowan’s fellow worker? If so, what surprised you?
11. Working Class Control has a majority of Black members, along with Whites, Latinos, and others. Does this reflect the composition of the working class? Of unions? Of the struggles for fundamental social change?
12. In her speech in Pilsen, Rowan raises some demands (page 192). Which two of these demands do you think are the most important for building a better life for people?